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20 November 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Information Processing Staff, OPPB

SUBJECT : Comments on PFIAB Correspondence  
on Information Handling

1. The proposed exchange of memoranda indicates to me that we and the PFIAB are farther apart than ever on the information handling issue. Both we and they seem to have become more rigid and polarized in our positions (even though this exchange, like those in the past, is a classical example of bureaucratic euphemism).

2. My first reaction in reading both papers was the question: Has anyone seriously tried to find out why the PFIAB feels so strongly on this issue? The Knox Panel and the Baker Panel members are not stupid. If they are ill-informed, that is as much a criticism of us as it is of them. I would characterize the polarization of the opposing views as follows:

Us:

--PFIAB is viewed as a nuisance.

--Its panel members have preconceived notions about our weaknesses and listen to our arguments only when it is in their interest to do so.

--They have not bothered to seek the facts; they ignore what we have already done.

--Their recommendations are so out-of-line that their qualifications for reviewing information handling activities in the community can be seriously questioned.

NSC/PFIAB Review Completed.

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Them:

- The Community has not displayed any interest in inter-agency cooperation; their parochial interests prevail.
- It is unaware or unable to exploit the technology.
- It has chosen the wrong people to represent its views.
- It lacks the statutory authority and it is not organized to do an adequate job at the Community level.

In my view, this polarization exists (in thought if not in words) and neither party is doing much to break the deadlock.

3. I believe both papers are partly right and partly wrong.

a. The PFIAB paper is right in expressing the need to do a better job. It is probably right in suggesting the need for better management mechanisms. It is wrong in expressing its frustration thru words having a connotation of urgency and crisis. It is wrong in prescribing what we ought to do and how we ought to do it.

b. The draft response is right in expressing a need for deliberate and careful action and in noting the complexity of the problem. It is wrong in expressing satisfaction with our current status--the real world is not as tidy as the draft infers, notwithstanding DCID's, committees and the like.


4. Perhaps I am naive, but has anyone thought about the effects of doing what the PFIAB suggests? In what ways would it be harmful; how would it be helpful? It does not sound like this has been done; instead the PFIAB paper has been interpreted as an accusation which must be answered. An alternative path is to acknowledge some of our specific problems (without diluting the remarks on progress) and state what we intend to do to improve these particular situations. Example: our performance on COINS has been poor; what can be done to change that?

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5. It may be useful for Dr. Steininger to talk with the Director about what Mr. Kissinger's reaction to the proposed response might be. He has some exposure to the Community information handling issue and probably is attuned to the current White House/PFIAB climate.

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Acting Director of Computer Services

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cc: ADD/S&T